DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 206 IR 050 888

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TITLE Education and Training in the Context of a National Scientific Information Policy.
PUB DATE [Sep 84]
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the FID/ET Seminar (The Hague, Netherlands, September 1984).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Planning; Foreign Countries; *Information Science; *Information Scientists; Information Utilization; *International Cooperation; *Library Education
IDENTIFIERS *Spain

ABSTRACT

This discussion of the need for, and development of, education and training for information specialists and information users in the context of national scientific information policy focuses on attempts made in Spain over the past decade to formulate a national policy for scientific information and documentation. The central objective of these attempts has been to try to solve the problem of a lack of institutional character and a lack of coordination between the various courses and schools. Self-education is cited as the main feature of the training of information specialists in Spain. Among the topics discussed are: (1) the Library and Documentation Course offered by the Center for Bibliographic and Documentary Studies; (2) a Higher Course for Documentation established by the faculty of Information Sciences of Madrid University; and (3) the proposed "Action Plan in the Field of Scientific Information and Documentation." The problem of user training is also considered. Finally, it is suggested that education and training problems are an area where international cooperation should play an essential role and that the programs of FID/ET (the International Federation for Documentation/Study Committee on Education and Training) and FID/II (Study Committee on Information for Industry) are extremely valuable in attempting to define the best possible solutions for the particular features of a given country. (THC)

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ED252206

Education and Training in the context of a National Scientific Information Policy

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On defining a National Scientific and Technical Information Policy, for a given country, a number of elements have to be included, They can be summarized as follows:

1. Improvement of primary publications.
2. Development of scientific Information infraestructures; basically, libraries and Documentation centres.
3. Formulation of a policy for the creation, distribution, utilization and access to data bases and other secondary information tools..
4. Research in the documentation field
5. Training of specialists and training of users.
6. International cooperation.

Education and training is an esential element. The human factor is fundamental in any activity, but even more in Information and Documentacion, as it is based on communication between human beings: those who produce, transmit and utilize Information. Training should be oriented, therefore, to each of these three groups: to the Information producers, to create it in the best possible form, for its transmission and utilization. To those who process and transmit Information, who are the central

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core of Information and Documentation specialists. And to the users, to teach them how to obtain the best results from Information systems and services. These three groups can be combined in two, specialists and users, as the producers of Information are always, at the same time, Information users.

A policy is, basically, a correlation between objectives and means: an exercise for adapting the aims to the resources available. It is, therefore, more necessary when the resources are limited. So, it is common, in countries with relatively large resources, that education and training systems, both for Information specialists and Information users, appear more or less spontaneously, without subordination to rigid political planning. On the contrary, when resources are short, a careful planning is needed, in order to obtain the best returns from those limited resources.

I shall mention, as an example, the case of my country, Spain, with really limited resources, where several attempts have been made, during the last decade, to formulate a National Policy for Scientific Information and Documentation. As the main points in this story, I should cite: the in-depth examination and confrontation meeting, carried out in 1973, in cooperation with OECD, on the needs and resources of scientific and technical Information in Spain. The creation, in 1975, of the National Centre for Scientific Information and Documentation, as a coordinating body or "focus" in OECD terminology, which did not reach its objectives, partly due to lack of resources, and partly for it had no real national scope, as it was limited to only one Ministry. And, at the present moment, the on-going project of an Action Plan in the field of Scientific Informa -

tion and Documentation, recently launched from the Ministry of Education and Science.

In all these attempts, education and training played always a fundamental role. The central objective has been to try to solve the main problem which exists in Spain, like in many other countries: the lack of institutional character and the lack of coordination between the various courses and schools. In the report prepared by the group of OECD experts, in 1973, it could be read: "As in many other countries, training in modern Information skills in Spain is random and un-coordinated. In reviewing the education of documentalists, librarians and so on, it is clear that the country is not developing Information scientists, as such, although very competent individuals have entered the Information field from other professional areas". The last sentence contains what has been the main feature of the training of Information specialists in Spain, the self-education. In most cases, they are university graduates, specially in scientific disciplines, who learned documentation techniques directly on the job and, in a few instances, completed their training with short stages in foreign countries.

The situation has changed very little in the last years. An institutional system for the training of Information specialists is still non-existent. I should mention a Royal Decree, dated in 1978, which enabled the Universities to create Library and Documentation courses. In practice, however, it was used only to grant official status to some previously existent schools for the training of library assistants, and has no effect at all on the training of high level Information and Documentation specialists, as such. On the other hand, two perma-

nent courses have been created, in recent years, which has a certain importance at this respect:

1. The Library and Documentation course, offered by the Centre for Bibliographic and Documentary Studies, belonging to the Ministry of Culture, through the General-Directorate for Libraries. This centre derived from the old School for Documentalists, located at the National Library, which, in spite of its name, trained a classical type of librarian. The course was completely remodelled, in 1979, by incorporanting modern aspects of Documentation. This pilot project, however, had no significant effects as, due to the location of the centre at the Directorate for libraries, it attracted students from the Humanities sector, whose main purpose was to enter the State Corps of Librarians, depending from that General Directorate. And finally, it came back again, last year, to the training of classical librarians.

2. A Higher Course for Documentation was established, some years ago, in the faculty of Information Sciences of Madrid University. Though the contents are in line with modern concepts of training in Documentation, it should be noted that, in Spain, the term "Information Sciences" and the corresponding faculty refers to mass communication media (newspapers, radio and TV) and so, most students are future journalists. For that reason, the course, though intended for graduates of any faculty, failed again in attracting people from most of them, specially from the scientific ones.

On this background, the new "Action Plan in the field of Scientific Information and Documentation" (which, esentially, is but a definition of a national policy in this matter) propo-

ses, once again, a way to give institutional character to the training of Information specialists in Spain. First of all, there is a definition of scope: we refer to high level (university graduates) scientific Information and Documentation specialists. Then, the plan analizes the two solutions upon which the various systems adopted in different countries are based, namely: a) the training of these specialits with an autonomous character, that is, by establishing Library and Documentation faculties at the universities, for students coming directly from secundary education. b) to consider Documentation as a technique, which should be taught in post-graduate courses to students who have concluded their university training in a particular subject (chemistry, physics, medicine etc.).

The proposed Plan adopts the second point of view, based on the assumption that Documentation is an activity which should be carried out on a given subject and, therefore, requires a solid background which only can be acquired through a formal university training; and then, to learn Information and Documentation techniques. Consequently, the Plan proposes the establishment of Library and Documentation post-graduate Schools, with inter-faculty status and directly dependent from the Rectors of the universities. It should be noted, however, that, according to the new spanish regulations, the Ministry of Education can only give general guidelines and recomendations, each University being responsible, with total autonomy, for the actual creation of the courses.

The Plan discusses also the relationship between librarians and documentalists or Information specialists, as for as

training is concerned. It is assumed that they are two different types of professionals, though with many connections and interrelations among them. So, it is proposed to create a common School, with independent courses or subjects, in such a way that the student, by taking a given group of them, can obtain the title of librarian, while by taking a different group (with some common courses, evidently) can obtain that of documentalist, or Information specialist. Finally, it is recommended the establishment of agreements between the new schools and the existing Documentation centres for carrying out practical work, as a possible efficient solution for the practical side of the training.

The problem of users training is also considered, although the proposed solutions are here less concrete. It is stressed the need of doing research on Information needs and uses by specific groups of users. Those studies, mainly carried out through surveys, could be, in many cases, the first occassion when potential users start to think of the way and form in which they need to receive information. According to the results of such studies, a programme of "ad hoc" courses should be organized for various groups of users. I should mention, for instance, the experimental study we are developing, in my Institute, on the three main groups of users we have, university departments, research centres and industrial enterprises, to which a fourth group is added, that of "future users" i.e. the present university students. In this same line, we are starting now an experimental programme of "ad hoc" courses for different groups and levels of users.

I have referred to a concrete example, that of Spain, to illustrate the very important role that education and training problems play in defining a National Scientific Information and Documentation Policy. This problem is so much important, as it is not yet solved in many countries. And for that reason, I consider this is a matter where International cooperation should play an essential role. Activities like this Seminar, or, more generally, the whole programme of FID/ET are extremely valuable, when we try to define the best possible solutions for the particular features of a given country. I mentioned, at the beginning, International Cooperation as one of the key elements of any Scientific Information Policy. I would add, now, that it has a certain "horizontal" character, as it acts on all others. In this sense, I should say that FID/ET has also a certain horizontal character in its relationship with other FID committees. As an example, I can mention its relations with FID/II, the Commitee on Information for Industry, to which I am presently the Chairman. In FID/II we also consider training problems as priority ones, though limited to the particular case of the training of Industrial Information officers. It is a point which, for many years, has been included among the main activities of our Committee and which has been recently reinforced, through our cooperation with FID/ET. The most recent result of that cooperation has been the Seminar we held last year, in Budapest, on the training of Industrial Information Officers, the proceedings of which have just been published by the National Technical Information Centre of Hungary. Roughly speaking, the Seminar was divided into three parts: a panoramic view of

the profile of the Industrial Information Officers and their training; a review of the situation in some developing coun - tries, their needs, and the posibilities of help offered by certain institutions in the industrialized world. And finally, a monographic part, on the implications of Information Resources Management on the training of these professionals. This last part was presented by Prof. Marta Dosa, the Chairman of FID/ET.

May I, then, conclude this presentation, by stressing once more my deep gratitude to the organizers of this Seminar, for the oportunity I have had to exchange these ideas.